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This "Monthly Letter" contains an interpretation of industrial evangelism in Asia. It is drawn from "A Commentary on Industrial Evangelism" which is produced regularly by The Committee on Industrial Life and Vocations of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

INDUSTRIAL EVANGELISM IN ASIAN AREAS

The programme of industrial evangelism is in its earliest stage in most Asian nations. Japan, which has had the longest history of industrialization in this area, has done more experimentation in terms of programme. Korea, India and the Philippines have definite programmes underway. But among the 13 Asian nations represented at the Asian Conference, there was a general awareness of the immediate need for the Church to commit itself to work in this industrial field.

In reviewing the notes, the speeches and the discussions of the Conference there appear to be at least three distinct approaches being made in Asia. All these approaches are in their earliest beginnings and it is difficult to say what their outcome will be. In each case the approach is a response to the cultural situation in which the Church finds itself. It is also fair to say that each approach generally reflects the basic theological thinking within the local churches. Besides this theological factor with the churches, the programme of evangelism undertaken is determined by several external factors: 1) the predominant religious background of the nation; 2) the general government attitude toward Christianity; 3) the attitude of the local trade union leadership; 4) the attitude of a particular factory owner or manager toward the Christian religion.

One type of approach was evidenced in the programme of industrial evangelism evolving among the Korean churches. This approach can be designated as direct 'in-plant' evangelism. This method calls for the evangelization of workers within the environs of the factory ground. Since the Korean programme is just beginning this programme is going on in at least four factories. The determining factor here is the plant owner or manager. Examples were cited of dedicated Christian laymen, who as factory owners or managers, provided the opportunity for evangelism inside the plant. This might be in the form of a worship service in a chapel built on factory ground, or it might be through Bible study groups among the workers within the plant or through posters or tracts. One

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Korean delegate cited the example of a factory owner who had to maintain guards at four gates to prevent stealing within the plant. After he had begun a programme of evangelism within the plant, the attitude of the workers had changed so that the factory needed but one guard.

From this approach we go to a more indirect approach of industrial evangelism as practised in India. Here the determining cultural factors all militate against any direct evangelistic approach. India is a non-Christian culture in which there is a resurgence of the old faiths. The general attitude toward Christianity is that it is a Western religion. In most cases both the trade union leadership and the plant manager are non-Christians. If they are not negative toward the Christian faith, then they regard it with indifference. In this kind of situation the Christian often has to make his witness through the contribution he makes to the welfare of the people. Through the work of M.A.Z. Rolston, a Christian layman, the programme of industrial evangelism in North India has concentrated first in winning the confidence of the trade union leadership, and secondly in helping establish a worker's education programme for the members of the union. The Christian thus seeks to educate a responsible trade union leadership to achieve justice and dignity for the working people. In all this the trade union leadership is aware that Mr. Rolston is a Christian and that his concern for them is motivated by his faith in Christ.

In Japan a third type of approach has evolved. The Japanese churches have called their programme 'occupational' evangelism. One method of 'occupational' evangelism involves the training of Christian workers in making a witness on their job. The Christian workers are trained outside of their work in Labour Gospel Schools. These schools are set up in local churches. Through Bible study, discussion and prayer meetings the workers are helped to see the relationship of their faith to their daily labour. The labourer, through his attitude toward his work and through his friendships on his job, makes his personal witness to his fellow-workers. In Japan the Church's programme of industrial evangelism faces a growing secularization of culture brought on, in part, by the very industrial life it seeks to evangelize. The churches are often faced with an indifference on the part of factory managers and workers. This indifference has proved to be a challenge instead of a hindrance to the Christian witness. It has paved the way for experimentation in the ways of reaching the workers. Within factories Christians have been instrumental in setting up recreational programmes for the benefit of their fellow-workers. In one case, a young factory worker organized a singing group within her plant. Through her personal witness she brought into the church seven of her fellow-workers including the factory manager and his wife.

These three types of evangelistic approach to industry can be characterized as 1) direct 'in-plant' evangelism; 2) evangelism through Christian service; 3) evangelism through the layman's occupation.

No definite pattern of industrial evangelism is as yet evident within the Philippines. Certain determining factors will limit the approach along certain lines. Direct 'in-plant' evangelism has been advised against by both trade union and management people. Officers and owners within business are cautious about beginning any type of religious programme within the plant. Since approximately 85 % of the population is Roman Catholic, a religious programme within the plant might become a divisive force among the workers. Most factory owners feel that their labour-management relations are complicated enough without adding a religious issue. One notable exception to this feeling

is Don Toribio Teodoro, an active evangelical layman and the owner of the Ang Tibay Shoe Company. Don Teodoro has explained that his faith in God cannot be separated from his work as a factory owner. In response to this belief he has built a community church outside his plant to which the workers are invited. On the 27th of every month, Don Teodoro's special day of Thanksgiving, all his employees are in attendance at this service. Each work day at Ang Tibay begins with a 15 minute period of calisthenics and prayer.

The programme of industrial evangelism within the Philippines will probably develop along the line of evangelism through the layman's occupation. There is an opportunity for evangelism on a person to person basis within industrial life. The training of laymen to make an effective witness through their work is the approach given the most attention. One 'young-workers-in-industry' meeting has already been held this year. Twenty-five factory workers discussed their job problems and the relation of their faith to their work. One particular phase which might be considered a fourth type of approach is the development of Christian leadership in the industrial field. This development of Christian leadership is in particular evidence in the Philippines. The Filipino leadership which took part in the Asian Conference showed the influence which the evangelical faith has exerted in giving outstanding men and women to public life. People of responsibility both in labour and management have moved into their particular tasks because of their sense of Christian vocation. It might be said in connection with this fourth type, that it is the Church's responsibility to help young people see their particular work as a ministry and to encourage them to take Christian leadership.